

Rep. John Campbell III (R-Calif.) addressed America's struggling economy and the 2008 presidential campaign in front of a crowd of approximately 70 students last night in the Intercultural Center.

Campbell, a member of the House Committee on the Budget and the House Committee on Financial Services, focused primarily on the need for earmark reform and the recent stimulus package passed through Congress. He said that while in office, he has pushed hard for earmark reform.

He began his speech with a discussion of the country's economic state. "I believe we are in a recession now. I believe that come August or July, they will announce that we have been in a recession since early December or late November of 2007," he said.

"Now nobody out there wants to use the R-word. ... If we say 'recession,' everybody will tighten up even more than they would have otherwise and they'll do all kinds of things and they will deepen and worsen the recession," he said.

Campbell went on to talk about earmark reform, saying that while earmarks make up only 3 percent of money spent by Congress, they are by far the biggest problem facing the federal budget. He said that although they are only a small portion of money spent, they are often attached to bills allowing much greater spending.

He said that it is easy to fall into the trap of increasing earmarks because of the constant demands for them and the desire to get reelected.

Campbell then discussed the latest stimulus package passed by Congress, arguing that the stimulus package was misdirected and that the recession was not consumer-led, but rather caused by decline in investment and capital.

"We got this problem because people spent too much, so what are we doing? We're handing them a check and telling them to go spend some more," he said. "Buy a flat-screen TV and save America, I don't think so. You have to look at the problem. [For example], you know if your arm hurts, you don't treat your leg."

Campbell, who worked on the economic advisory team for former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney's presidential campaign, compared the economic plans of presidential candidates. He told the audience that former New York City mayor Rudolph Giuliani's tax plan had impressed him and that the plan of Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) seemed unsustainable to him.

"He's got socialized medicine, he's got more welfare, he's got food stamps, he's got free houses and tax cuts for 95 percent of the American people," he said. "Always be scared of very charismatic, good-speaking people who promise everybody everything, because you'll never know what they'll really do."